DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 317 523 SP 032 146

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TITLE The Rhetoric of Reform in Teacher Education: Report on a Case Study of Cooperative Learning for Mainstreaming.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 53p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Chicago, IL, March 28-31, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; Communication Skills; *Cooperative Learning; Discourse Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Mainstreaming; *Motivation Techniques; *Persuasive Discourse; Program Evaluation; *Rhetorical Criticism

ABSTRACT

The case under study was a staff development program devoted to methods for instructional grouping called "cooperative learning." In this case study, the rhetoric of cooperative learning for mainstreaming was tested by examining the words and actions of teachers and administrators for congruence with rhetorical devices. Three kinds of information were investigated: (1) responses to a survey of over 50 teachers and administrators who participated in programs promoting cooperative learning methods for mainstreaming; (2) textual artifacts of those programs for inservice teacher education; and (3) group interviews with participants. Both documentary and interview data were analyzed in reference to three rhetorical devices: topics of argument, types of commonplace, and types of figures of speech. These analyses portray specific discursive strategies chosen by teacher educators in reference to informants' accounts of the rhetorical success of these strategies in creating and maintaining support among teachers and students for mainstreaming and cooperative learning. The paper endeavors to show, through rhetorical analysis, the degree to which this program of educational reform succeeded in its goal of changing teachers' beliefs and practices. (JD)

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# The Rhetoric of Reform in Teacher Education: Report on a Case Study of Cooperative Learning for Mainstreaming

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Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Chicago, February 1990

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine a recent reform implementation in teacher education. A staff-development program advocating changes in instructional grouping is examined for rhetoric that embodies assumptions and communicates conventions of theory, research, and practice.

## Introduction

This is a report of a study conducted as a rhetorical analysis. It is conceptually based upon pragmatist philosophies stressing the inter-relation of words, actions, and their practical consequences. The methods of analysis are drawn from philosophical and literary inquiry based on recent scholarship in the long-standing field of rhetoric.

The case under study is a staff development program devoted to methods for instructional grouping called "cooperative learning." In the past decade, dissemination of these methods was supported by Federal grants for mainstreaming, that is, integrating students of diverse abilities into public-school classes. Data was collected from a program run by the Cooperative Learning Center (CLC) at the University of Minnesota under Federal grants made to the CLC in, 1979-83 for mainstreaming purposes.

Field research on participation in cooperative learning for mainstreaming was conducted in a midwestern urban school district which participated in CLC programs during, 1980-82. In preliminary surveys, over fifty teachers and administrators who participated in CLC activities were contacted about the goals and methods of this research project. Three kinds of information were investigated: first, responses to a survey of teachers and administrators who participated in programs promoting cooperative learning

methods for mainstreaming; second, textual artifacts of those programs for inservice teacher education; and third, group interviews with participants. Documentary data and interview data were analyzed in reference to three rhetorical devices: topics of argument; types of commonplace; and types of tropes, or figures of speech. These analyses portray specific discursive strategies chosen by teacher educators in reference to informants' accounts of the rhetorical success of these strategies in creating and maintaining support among teachers and students for mainstreaming and cooperative learning.

In answer to the question, "What happened to this reform after nearly ten years?" this paper endeavors to show through rhetorical analysis the degree to which this particular program of educational reform succeeded in its stated purposes of changing teachers' beliefs and practices. Any such success is demonstrated by evidence of agreement among teachers, administrators, and teacher educators in their statements about the ideas and techniques of cooperative learning for mainstreaming. From this particular case, some implications can be drawn for current and future teacher education programs.

## A Theory of Rhetoric

The field of rhetoric is ancient and complex; most cultures have rhetorical traditions that antedate written language. Aristotle defined rhetoric as an art "not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects," and "the faculty of observing in any given case the means of persuasion" (in McKeon, 1941, p. 1329). For most of Western culture, the study of rhetorical forms was enshrined as the second of the seven liberal arts, dominating European culture; for centuries, as Vickers (1970) said,

> rhetoric *was* education *was* culture... It is difficult to grasp this equation today, but it is essential if we are to understand that when writers from Quintillian to Dante to Puttenham say that eloquence is the most important of human disciplines, they mean it literally (p. 23).

Classical and medieval rhetoricians developed detailed technical manuals for public and private communication, most notably the legal or political address epitomized in Ciceronian orations and dramatically rendered in such familiar parts of the school curriculum as Marc Antony's speech in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* or Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address."

As modern science came to dominate traditional humanism, rhetoric fell into disrepute, caricatured as imprecise, deceptive, and bombastic misuse of language, epitomized in

the epithet, "mere rhetoric." Despite occasional attempts to scientifically present principles of effective communication, rhetoricians occupied increasingly marginal positions in academic and public circles.

During the past decades, however, a new generation of rhetorical theorists has emerged, led by legal scholars in Europe and literary theorists in America (see: Bitzer & Black, 1971; Nelson et al., 1987). In the tradition of pragmatist philosophers such as William James or John Dewey, such scholars as Kenneth Burke and Richard McKeon began asserting that language as a form of action was complex and dynamic, requiring cautious interpretation since all forms of linguistic analysis are themselves linguistic systems made up of symbols and prone to ambiguity. Language, in other words, can not be treated as a natural phenomenon subject to experimental control whose outcomes could thus be predicted, especially in its practical applications. The realm of rhetorical studies, much like those of qualitative researchers, is therefore pragmatic, specific and detailed; according to Lloyd Bitzer (1971), "Rhetorical works belong to the class of things which obtain their character from the circumstances of the historical context in which they occur" (in Johannsen, 1971, p. 384) Persuasive discourse must be treated as a series of linked actions; as Bitzer further said, "Rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by direct application of energy to objects, but the creation of

discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action"(*ibid.*)

Rhetorical analysis has a place among case studies taking interpretive approaches toward understanding the complex linguistic transactions within social environments. Recent works including rhetorical analyses of organizations include studies of dramatic roles or descriptive metaphors (Mangham & Overington, 1987; Morgan, 1986). Research on schools that exemplifies rhetorical approaches includes studies of educational policy implementation (Firestone, 1988; Floden, 1984; Reid, 1988; Provenzo et al., 1989), as well as ethnographic and first-person narratives of school life (e.g., Biklen, 1988; Bogdan & Kugelmass, 1984; Grant & Sleeter, 1986; Traver, 1988). Despite various ideological orientations and conceptual presuppositions, such works share a high priority for the everyday means of persuasion by which organizational structures and social interactions are defined and maintained.

In summary, recent rhetorical theories stress the practical circumstances under which language is produced, and attendant research assesses the effectiveness of language by its impact on those settings, not according to general principles. The rules of all games, including language games, do not prevent conflict so much as guarantee it. As one of the most influential rhetorical scholars of this century, Kenneth Burke, has written (1950/69), a theory of rhetoric

> ...must lead through the scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of counterpressure, the logomachy, the onus of ownership, the Wars of Nerves, the War. ... Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall (p. 23).

Many educational researchers now claim that, to understand and transform schooling, they must take complex and multi-layered approaches. The ancient arts and modern scholarship of rhetoric seem well-suited to these tasks.

## Findings

The crucial test of rhetoric is the congruence it finds in the words and actions of its audience. In identifying with the one another's motives, adhering to the disposition of topics and attending to their elocution, people construct and inhabit the architecture of persuasion. Rhetorical congruence is a cooperative endeavor, but not in the same sense as simple agreement, since disagreement or conflict can also serve as communication. By analogy with architecture, spaces defined as inside or outside an edifice are all related in congruence with the edifice. Even where there is substantial identification among parties in a rhetorical situation, disagreements can still occur.

In this study, the rhetoric of cooperative learning for mainstreaming was tested by examining the words and actions of teachers and administrators for congruence with rhetorical devices presented in the CLC curriculum. In the following subsections, data will be summarized and then then analyzed. The case under study was one inservice teacher education program implementing cooperative learning for mainstreaming. It took place in "Lake City," a midwestern city of about 150,000 population.[1] In, 1979, Lake City schools enrolled about 24,500 students and employed about 1,500 teachers and 250 instructional support personnel. Of these, about 250 teachers and 150 support personnel were directly involved in providing special education services.

In the spring of, 1979, "Tom Norris," an administrator responsible for staff development programs in the Lake City School District, attended a conference at which the directors of the CLC demonstrated cooperative learning methods. As he later said, "...it clicked with me at that point." He saw in cooperative learning a method for dealing with some of his district's pressing problems, such as mainstreaming, racial integration, and curriculum differentiation. As he further stated,

> In my own teaching, it had always been a troublesome thing for me to put kids of varying abilities, skill

[1] This name is pseudonymous, as are all names given for this district's schools, teachers, and administrators.

> levels, personalities, sexes - everything - together and have them learn to function effectively. Plus, the other thing that clicked with me, probably because I grew up in a one-room schoolhouse and did a lot of peer kinds of activities, it really responded to my own preferred learning style, my own experience.[2]

This identification led him to contact the CLC directly and to begin negotiations with them for staff development programs in Lake City.

In the spring of, 1980, after negotiations with the CLC, Lake City administrators made formal application to the Board, who approved the District's participation. As adopted, the plan involved two cycles to be conducted over two years, with a third year of follow-up activities (Johnson, 1979). In each cycle, teams would be assembled, consisting of equal numbers of special education teachers and regular education teachers, as well as administrators and support staff. In the first cycle, these teams totalled 33 participants drawn from three schools. In the second cycle, the teams were made up of 4 additional teachers from the first set of sites and, in addition, 35 teachers from a new set of sites.

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[2] Quotation from group interview, 10/9/88. Hereinafter, all quotes from interview data be cited parenthetically in the text according to their page numbers in St. Maurice (1989).

These teams were selected through successive steps down the administrative hierarchy: once district-level administrators had secured approved contracts, building administrators attended a presentation about the project and were asked to volunteer their schools. Administrators who volunteered then solicited staff members at each site. All curriculum materials and instructional costs, including tuition for graduate credits at the University of Minnesota, were borne by the Federal grant to the CLC. Local costs consisted of compensation for teachers attending summer workshops and three days of released time during the school year, as well as clerical services and instructional space.

The schedule of activities was set according to standards developed for all CLC programs under the mainstreaming grant, as follows: a five-day workshop in August, three one-day workshops in September, November, and February, and a three-day workshop in June. The workshops were organized so that a large-group presentation began each day, from which small groups were formed for planned activities. In some instances, small groups were randomly assigned but, as the workshops proceeded, most groups were selected in correspondence with building teams.

In retrospect, the means by which the CLC came to Lake City conforms to a top-down model of educational reform, in that all policies, planning, and funding resulted from decisions taken in central locations and then transmitted in

large scale to schools and classrooms (see: Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Kirp & Jensen, 1986; Singer & Butler, 1988). Local, small-scope teacher initiatives took place, but usually in response to decisions made in Lake City's central offices, at the CLC, or at the Federal Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. In surveys and interviews, all participants recalled their first contact with the CLC project as coming from an administrator, and no one recalled any initial general survey of teachers or even a first contact by a colleague.

In all, seventy teachers and four administrators (counting Norris) were selected as "opinion leaders" through a process that combined individual initiative and administrative efficiency. This approach to team-building evokes what Judith Warren Little has called a seductive image, one that often fades upon close inspection. Even if the building administrators and teachers were "key individuals," about which their recollections of the selection process leave room for doubt, this selection method risks what Little has called "creeping exclusivity," in that the most enthusiastic volunteers get the benefits of innovative programs. By analogy, a teacher or any interlocutor who pays attention only to students or audience members who raise their hands in group discussion is spending disproportionate resources on those who may be least in need of persuasion.

If the purpose of a reformer's rhetoric is large-scale change, then ripple effects must be sustained for increasing numbers of participants over long durations. As Little concludes, "It is simply implausible that a small cadre of staff developers in any district will add measurably to the general fund of teachers' knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm, or that programs ... could be mounted by a district on a scale large enough to exert widespread influence" (Little, 1984, p. 101). The staff development programs planned by CLC and Lake City in, 1979-82 assumed that large-scale changes in teachers' performance and district policies would eventuate after such a cadre - less than 5% of the total teaching staff - had spent no more than eleven days in formal meetings devoted to cooperative learning theories and methods.

Cooperative learning theories and practices have consistently emphasized face-to-face interaction among individuals: e.g., individual responses to small-group interactions are at the basis of the CLC's evaluation reports, as reported in questionnaire summaries and anecdotal records. The paradox of this strategy is that, in promoting mainstreaming reforms, small-scale processes were linked to large-scale effects. Success on one scale was said to lead directly to success on all others; by top-down implementation strategies, the methods were considered expandable to fit the anticipated scope of mandated educational reform.

The next section will focus upon these change agents, specifically fifty participants from the, 1980-82 CLC project who were still employed in the Lake City School District. Their recollections over a span of years will offer glimpses into the durability of mainstreaming purposes and CLC methods. The voices of these participants will supply evidence of the success of the CLC's reform implementations and rhetorical strategies. First, survey data will be presented; then, data from four group interviews will be described.

Survey Data

In April of 1988, surveys were sent out to Lake City staff members who had attended the workshops in 1980-82 and were still employed by the district. Comprising forty-eight teachers and four administrators, this group was selected because of the likelihood that they would have continually maintained the purposes and procedures of cooperative learning for mainstreaming as originally proposed. Eighteen completed forms were returned, for a reply rate of 37.5%. Eleven of these, or 21%, volunteered for further research. Since the survey was designed to acquire only general information prior to gathering interview data, it does not supply any representative sample upon which statistical tests may be performed. Nonetheless, it does indicate the degree to

which the CLC programs inspired some teachers to change their practices for the purposes of reform.

In the first part of the survey, participants were asked to recall of the circumstances under which they took the workshops. Not surprisingly, most did not recall the specific details of their first participation. Nevertheless, in reply to a general question about their opinions of the workshops at the time, twelve responses were given, practically all containing highly approving comments. For example, one reply read,

> I found the training to be one of the best I have participated in. The information was excellent, well organized and very practical. Over the years I have supported the implementation of the concepts into many classrooms.

In answer to the next question about present opinions of the workshops, twelve replies were again submitted, most with approbation, e.g.,

> I still hold the experience in high regard. The people from Johnson & Johnson did an excellent job. The activities and ideas were practical and helpful. (314)

One respondent said that administrative support had not been extensive enough:

> They should have followed up on it. We should have had release time to share ideas with other cooperative learning teachers. We also needed at time to observe the

> program in action and also see variations on the program. A refresher course would have been helpful. Parent education on cooperative learning is important (315).

This reply would seem to testify that, for at least one participant, the promised ripple effect did not occur.

Most respondents were supportive of the purposes and methods of cooperative learning for mainstreaming, although there were remarks criticizing some purposes of the CLC program, e.g.,

> They did not deal with a wide enough gap between the 'top' and the 'bottom' of the group. - - did not deal with racial/socioeconomic differences...(315)

These qualifications were in the minority of survey responses, however, as a wide majority reported favor for cooperative learning methods. A smaller majority did report using them in mainstreamed classes, although these situations probably were linked to respondents' teaching assignments. Overall, respondents reported a high initial level of enthusiasm in implementing cooperative learning for mainstreaming.

In response to questions about support for implementing these changes, the survey indicates mixed results. Participants surveyed report that support, either from administrators or colleagues, apparently depended upon participation in CLC workshops. The range of replies about support also gives some evidence that the planned ripple

effect did not always occur during and after the CLC programs.

Issues about administrative and collegial support are also related to mainstreaming strategies, in that Lake City, like most school districts, was not able to build large-scale integrated programs without extensive Federal funding. During the, 1980's, allocations promised in the EHA authorizations were actually diminished. As one survey respondent said, mainstreaming

> was successful but was not continued with the same emphasis once funding dropped off for additional assistance. To continue implementing a program like this, the teachers need a support base to extend and get feedback about the ways they're using or could be using the program (325).

In other words, even top-down implementation models were not sustained as resource allocations were decreased.

Most survey responses indicated continued confidence in the values of mainstreaming and cooperative learning. In reply to questions about continued implementation, most answers received were enthusiastic, as for example:

> I feel the cooperative learning approach is one of the best instructional strategies for meeting the needs of increasingly more diverse student groups. It enhances student self-concept and allows teachers a freedom from

> traditional grading structures thereby allowing them to appreciate the differences in their students (327).

In addition to administrative support, another factor apparently affecting implementation of cooperative learning for mainstreaming was student and community familiarity with purposes and procedures. As building teams were dispersed over time, many teachers were ironically alone in using cooperative learning for mainstreaming, amplifying the problems of innovation and change, as one survey response pointed out:

> When I use coop. groups, I meet with great resistance from better students and parents of better students. I also end up with many groups in which the lowest skilled person is both so low skilled and so poorly behaved that the others in the group cannot with the best will in the world, bring this person up to minimum standards. This is despite many modifications of the individual responsibility/ group interdependence structure (329-330).

Individual teachers who regularly face students unused to the structure and operation of cooperative groups meet continuous resistances and struggles. It is noteworthy that this particular respondent has indicated continued commitment to these methods and purposes despite these obstacles.

To further discuss implementation issues with educators who express these commitments despite these difficulties,

group interviews were conducted. These interviews will be described in the following section. Like the surveys, these data from self-selected volunteers do not present a representative sample but can still be of use for rhetorical analysis in that they give evidence of the words and deeds of participants who have remained in support of cooperative learning for mainstreaming.

## Interview Data

In an attempt to simulate the team relationships that were formed during the workshops and follow-up activities, the ten volunteer interview informants were placed in four groups. Three groups represent at least one administrator, regular-class teacher, and special-class teacher; the fourth group did not because of a late withdrawal. In that these educators took large blocks of time away from their pressing concerns to discuss the long-term effects of a staff-development program that took place as long as eight years ago, these interviews exhibit informants' continuing devotion to cooperative learning and mainstreaming.

The format of the interviews was loosely-structured, again in simulation of group projects in the CLC programs. The questions were of three general types: first, background questions, to elicit statements describing awarenesses of the purposes and procedures of cooperative learning for mainstreaming; second, analytic questions seeking statements

of opinion about the procedures followed by the CLC in Lake City; and third, evaluative questions seeking statements of opinion about the long-term effects of CLC programs and mainstreaming reforms. These questions therefore roughly correspond to time frames before, during and after informants' interactions with persuasive discourse. After each session, audio recordings were transcribed into text and edited for clarity. Each participant was given a draft copy of the transcript and invited to make editorial additions or deletions. [3]

Generally, the sessions were conducted as informal conversations among teachers. This kind of data-collection seems suited for rhetorical analysis, in that congruence of language and action consists of subtle interpretations not readily amenable to formal classification. The conversations that will be analyzed in the following sections, like any conversation, cannot be entirely reducible to any categories of analysis. The purpose of these sections, therefore, is not to prove the nature of something that happened in space and time, but to attend some scenes in an ongoing drama. The rhetoric of cooperative learning for mainstreaming took shape

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[3] The processes of speech-to-text and cooperative editing are currently undergoing wide discussion among writers in various disciplines of the sciences and humanities. These interviews were processed in a version of cooperative text akin to that proposed in: Clifford & Marcus, 1985; Tyler, 1987.

in many events and interpretations, some of which will be examined here.

## Analysis

### Topics

In theories of rhetoric whose traditions reach back to times before written language, topics are usually defined as general terms upon which coherent arguments can be based. Typologies of topics list starting-points for discourse, and have always been crucial parts of any rhetorical curriculum. In terms derived from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, three topics of the CLC program may be stated as follows:

entities - autonomous individuals;
ends - goal structures that define relations;
means - skills that individuals acquire.

These topics are derived from the works of American social psychologists, especially those of Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch (Johnson & Johnson, 1975, 1979).

In the surveys responses and interview comments, these topics are frequently in evidence, as in the above-cited survey response describing difficulty with "the lowest skilled person [who] is both so low skilled and so poorly behaved" (329). This brief statement shows that the respondent is familiar with the concept of individual

entities whose education can be discussed as progress by means of discrete skills. Numerous other examples of the prevalence of these topics can be found in the interview transcripts: e.g., Anne, an eighth-grade English teacher, described cooperative learning as "individualization on a group basis in a sense, so that instead of going one-to-one you can go one-to-five"(405). Similarly, Ann, a special-education teacher at the elementary level, said that, in "selling" cooperative learning "with adults, I guess I'd stress the individualization and learning styles" (343).

The prevalence of individuals and skills as topics of educators' discourse does not in itself provide solid evidence of congruence with the rhetoric of cooperative learning for mainstreaming, since these topics are literally commonplace in American education in this century. More suggestive of congruence with the CLC program would be incidences the topic of goal structures. According to an informal coding system, each informant made at least one comment in which the topic of "goal structure" could be considered explicit; for an example, Kate, who began using cooperative learning for mainstreaming in the first cycle of workshops, said that she uses these methods in her current primary-level assignment, in the following words:

> Math problem solving is even fun to do it with. I enjoy doing that. And there also you can give a real specific goal (445).

At no point in the data is there evidence that any of these informants did not fully accept and find substantial agreement with the topics of entities, ends and means: i.e., individual students who could be directed toward ends of skills-acquisition by means of structured goals.

Commonplaces

Commonplaces are, in rhetorical terms, topics that are selected for structuring an argument and making it accessible to a specific audience. For example, a set of commonplaces widely employed in discussions about reform in teacher education during the past two decades was originally presented by Joseph Schwab (1978) as follows:

> Defensible educational thought must take account of four commonplaces of *equal* rank: the learner, the teacher, the milieu, and the subject matter. None of these can be omitted without omitting a vital factor in educational thought and practice (p. 371).

In rhetorical canons such as those by Aristotle or Cicero, commonplaces of invention were considered innovative topics with general appeal, and commonplaces of memory were said to be those topics already familiar. In their usage in inventing, disposing and delivering discourse, however, variant meanings of the term were often combined into one denoting stock devices for preparing and memorizing persuasive arguments, especially to medieval rhetoricians,

from whose commonplace books the term came to acquire the connotation of being no more than formulaic exercise. In a definition of commonplaces that alludes to this ambivalence, Richard McKeon (1987) wrote,

> A commonplace is a place or seat of arguments; it is not itself an argument but a heuristic device by which issues that have never been considered before suggest distinctions and relations to be examined in search for solutions. Some problems recur frequently, however, and a 'commonplace' has come to mean the irreflective repetition of identical formulae as an easy substitute for the invention of a pertinent solution (p. 53).

As oratorical agendas or scientific taxonomies, commonplaces serve to orient topics of argument by appealing to an audience's prevailing knowledge or mood. These topics can either be fresh uses of familiar terms, or hackneyed terms that substitute familiarity for acuity.

In the CLC curriculum, social relationships are evaluated according to three commonplace categories, those of cooperative, competitive, or individualistic goal structures, stated in a course handout as follows:

> Cooperation: *We sink or swim together*. I can attain my goal only if you attain your goal; there is a positive correlation among goal attainments.

> Individualization: *We are each in this alone.* My achieving my goal is unrelated to your achieving your goal; there is no correlation among goal attainments.
>
> Competition: *I swim, you sink; I sink, you swim.* If I obtain my goal, you cannot obtain your goal and vice versa; there is a negative correlation among goal attainments (Johnson & Johnson, n.d.).

These three categories may be called commonplaces, in that they comprise a "heuristic device by which issues ...suggest distinctions and relations to be examined," in McKeon's words. To persuade their audiences to follow their approach to their topics, the triad of individualistic, cooperative, and competitive goal structures is at the center of the CLC approach, and should therefore be conspicuous in the comments of teachers and administrators who identify themselves as longtime adherents of the methods and purposes of cooperative learning for mainstreaming.

It is significant, therefore, that coded references to cooperation are not numerous, far out-numbered by references to individualization, and even less relatively frequent than references to competition. For example, two comments that distinctly refer to only two of the CLC's triad occurred in survey responses, as follows:

> The distinction between competitive learning environments and cooperative environments was very important (312).

> It is increasingly important as we realize that students from other cultures may be totally uncomfortable w/ traditional competitive instructional environments. Students and teachers gain in knowledge and appreciation when they work in a cooperative environment (328).

In the interviews, occasional references were made to two-sided distinctions such as these, e.g., when Sally, a special education teacher, described her initial reactions to the CLC program:

> ...to me it was really neat, to see it talked about in that framework. It was the first time that I really internalized the fact that there was a real difference between competitive learning and cooperative learning, in what some of the subtle sort of definitions of those two types of learning, how they impacted kids, especially in special ed (368).

Although contrasts between competition and cooperation are clearly related to the CLC commonplaces, the three-sided distinction emphasized in the curriculum is markedly absent from the data.

It would seem that the topic of individual entities is an over-riding concern in the way the informants approach group formations. For examples, Ann said of her interest in cooperative learning that, "One thing that always comes to my mind is that, it addresses individual learning styles" (343).

As Anne said in reply to a question about what she found distinctive in her first encounters with the CLC curriculum,

> ...for me it was the strategy of individual responsibility and group interdependence. The fact that you could combine the two, and that that's the core of what makes a cooperative group work. All other small-group communication theory that I had had did not deal with that (399).

These and numerous other comments support the contention that the achievement and attitude measures used by theorists, researchers and practitioners of cooperative learning take the individual as their principal subject.

Congruence with the topic of individual entities in the CLC curriculum therefore gives an asymmetrically high priority to one of the triad of commonplaces. Given an emphasis upon individuals as agents, it would follow that another part of the CLC triad, competition, gains emphasis as well. It would appear from informants' comments that such means as individualized programs are preferred for redistributing academic rewards, and not the dismantling of competitive situations. This can be inferred through inspecting comments about such purely cooperative methods as group grading. Here again, a relative symmetry among cooperation, competition and individualization suggested by the CLC commonplaces and recommended in its curriculum is notably disrupted in the data. Group grades generally seem to

be employed much less frequently than intergroup competition, and are reportedly used most often in primary grades. The higher the grade levels, apparently, the less likely that a purely cooperative situation would be used. Kate explained this tendency, based on her experiences at middle and primary grades, as follows:

> In elementary school, we're really much more concerned with the child's progress, not so much grading them as in letting parents know where they are in the continuum, what reading level they're at and whether they're independent or not, instead of a basic average number [grade]. The thing I have always thought and the thing I think I discovered by accident even before I did cooperative learning, was the enormous amount of information children get from each other, and how well they learn to teach each other. To me, it's the social interaction that I found so important, especially with young children. I mean, my children have gotten so now they almost can't work independently (438).

The only group of informants who reported frequently using group grades were special education teachers, especially those who form groups of students for remedial lessons outside regular classes. As Kari, a middle-school reading specialist, said,

> ...you see kids who have been working on their own and work at a very fast pace, and then they're working in a

> group, and occasionally they're teaching other kids and going back and forth, and they're feeling good about themselves, because they have the forum. They can talk and share what they learn and then when the other kid comes back and asks questions, they can answer it that way. Also, you can see it in the eyes of a student who maybe has never received an A or a B, and he can get an A or a B in that group. And also the fact that you can grade on behavior and content, so they can see how their behavior affects what can happen and vice versa. And it's just kind of a feeling that kids can get when they're working in a group, because it's something that they have to vocalize. In a group, it would be very hard for a kid not to do well if they have the right behaviors in that group (421).

Such high priorities for interpersonal communications are not common in regular-class situations, where pressures for achievement (as measured in reference to an individual student's' performance) are brought to bear upon teachers by their own conceptions of excellence as well as those of parents, administrators, or policymakers.

Apparently, the CLC triad of commonplaces is altered in practice into a dyadic model in which individuals either attain personal benefits or compete for them through various kinds of group interactions and structures. Cooperation is rarely expressed as a distinct mode of action, but is instead

often treated as a subset of individualization or competition. It would therefore seem that the CLC commonplaces, however recognizable as devices of disposition, nonetheless abet confusion and contradiction when employed to resolve dilemmas of reform.

Tropes

Tropes, or figures of speech, are common in any discourse. According to White (1978) tropes "generate by their variation from what is 'normally' expected, and by the associations they establish between concepts normally felt not to be related or to be related in ways different from that suggested in the trope used" (p. 2). Tropes provide vivid images with which bonds of identification can be formed among speakers and audiences. Burke (1945/69) claimed that they may be categorized in four "master" tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (p. 503 ff). Simply summarized, these characterizations are:

- Metaphor, a figure used to present a *perspective* on the topic under discussion: e.g., "School is like a balance-wheel."
- Metonymy, a figure used to present a *reduction* of a topic: e.g., "Learning is a connection."
- Synecdoche, similar to metonymy, but used to make a topic into a *representation* of a larger whole: e.g., "School is embryonic social order."

- Irony uses figures of speech inter-related in *dialectic:* e.g., "Both social reproduction and critical resistance occur in schools."

The central trope in the CLC programs is the metonymy of correlation: cooperation is correlated to presumably tangible "goal-regions;" individual learning and social harmony are correlated to skills; and educational achievement is correlated to test measurements. In the data, it was evident that Lake City teachers were already familiar with this trope in the discourses of staff development and curriculum implementation, having often heard such opening phrases as, "The research shows teachers that..." Because quantitative research and bureaucratic policies are closely linked to special education, research correlations are frequently cited in support of mainstreaming reforms; for example, Kari said that

> I was under the impression that there was going to be more mainstreaming and that we better prepare ourselves for it ten years ago. The research was finding that that is the way to go, and let's be best prepared to deal with it (397).

It seems plain that, among practitioners, especially in an interview situation, the metonymic tropes of educational research are everyday fixtures of their professional dialects.

To what extent can these figures of educators' speech be linked to the CLC program? Although these limited data sets do not provide extensive demonstrations of teacher's retention of the matter and method of the CLC's social psychological research, notable examples were nonetheless in evidence, particularly in one instance in which Kate described a recent classroom research project that she conducted to show her students and their parents that cooperative learning methods were as effective as they were claimed to be. As she said in the interview,

> I found an absolute one-to-one correlation between the improvement in the spelling from week to week and how well the groups were getting on. I showed the children. I couldn't believe that it was absolutely one-to-one. The groups that got along improved in spelling and the ones that didn't get along didn't. I guess I hadn't thought it would be that close a correlation (439).

More than a figure of speech, this "simple study" is a demonstration of the sophistication and commitment that this study consistently found among Lake City's educators. Rather than take research findings as given, this teacher incorporated a process of inquiry into her curriculum planning and instructional practice. This instance may not be conclusive evidence of action congruent with rhetoric, but does raise questions about how more teachers could be

persuaded to adopt processes of inquiry into their teaching techniques.

In coding these data, the most frequently occurring trope was a metaphor, that of reification in which a concept or person is referred to as a "thing." In this analogy, cooperative learning or mainstreaming are each "something" that teachers and students do, not complex sets of words, attitudes, and actions. This everyday, commonsense usage of "thing" as a metaphor for intricate physical phenomena and mental noumena does not diminish its rhetorical force. As many commentators have pointed out, reform initiatives must take into account the reification (or "commodification") of social interactions and cultural formations, particularly in educational settings (see: Apple, 1987; Popkewitz, 1988).

Summary

This study set out to use rhetorical analysis to draw some connections among words, deeds and their consequences. The most obvious connection is that cooperative learning for mainstreaming did not succeed to the extent promised originally. To be sure, the numbers of teachers and students initially affected were greater than anticipated (Johnson & Johnson, 1982, p. ii). The teachers and administrators who were interviewed all agree, however, that the long-term effects of this initiative were not as great as anticipated. There has been some progress in Lake City schools toward full

inclusion of all students through increased inter-personal interactions, but these steps seem isolated and small-scale compared with the expectations stated in CLC program proposals and course materials. As Marie, an administrator, put her disappointment with cooperative learning, "If it is as dynamic a process as we seem to think it was, why has it not weathered the time?" (348)

The data presented here do not provide final answers for that question; instead they instigate a series of still more questions: to what extent were topics of individual entities, mediating skills, and structured ends taken for granted by CLC planners, instructors, Lake City School District administrators and teachers? Why does the CLC triad of commonplaces get truncated into a dyad at practically every mention? How does routine acceptance of individualistic norms affect theoretical formulations and practical applications of cooperative learning? What are some consequences of reductionistic figures of speech? What, if any, is the importance of a shift away from metaphors of danger in the discourses of the CLC and educators who implement cooperative learning? What are the effects of reifying metaphors in educators' discourses about theories, policies and practices?

This study indicates that some teachers and administrators did find in the CLC programs techniques for thinking, speaking and practicing cooperative learning for mainstreaming. For these individual agents, these methods

and purposes evidently did weather the test of time. Even so, these results leave other questions open for investigation, such as, what could have enabled team-formation to continue as individuals were dispersed and funding patterns changed? What enabling conditions were needed to produce the planned ripple effects? This study cannot be summarized without some appeal for continued investigation into such questions as these.

## Implications

Some implications can be drawn from this study, particularly for programs of teacher education that promote cooperative learning. In the following section, these implications will be presented in terms of the three rhetorical devices under analysis.

### Topics

The CLC curriculum has been identified with three topics: individual entities, structured ends, and specifiable means. These topics have found congruence with the words and actions of thousands of teachers over the past fifteen years. Nevertheless, this study suggests that the selection of these topics undermines in some ways schooling reform efforts such as mainstreaming. By choosing to emphasize these

three terms of argument, the CLC program may not be substantially distinct from policies and practices that label individuals, sorting out students for disparate kinds of schooling according to rigid norms. Incongruities among these topics and with the purposes of cooperative learning for mainstreaming might help explain why most participants in Lake City were disappointed with the results of staff development programs implementing these reforms.

In arguing for cooperative learning, topics must accommodate divided conceptions of individuality, that is, what Robert Bellah and associates (1985) call a "profound ambivalence" (ch. 6).[4] Human beings are unique creations that exist within historical situations bound by multiple sets of rules, i.e., rules of language, society, culture, politics, and so on. No single conception can contain all the intersecting values that bear upon human existence, so arguments for reforms such as cooperative learning for mainstreaming should be premised upon complicated sets of entities. At the outset of argument, the first premises therefore must define entities as hyphenated, i.e., as individuals-in-context and individuals-in-flux, instead of the traditional "bare" individuals.

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[4] See also Benhabib's chapter on the concept of "concrete other" in Benhabib & Cornell 1987.

As addressed by the CLC program and in most of educational psychology, most audiences readily identify with the topic of individual and social development by means of specifiable skills. This congruence, however, does not by itself resolve deep and enduring conflicts. Numerous studies have focused on the predominance in modern curricula of reified conceptions of skills that quantify intelligence, literacy and communication (e.g., Sirotnick & Oakes, 1986; Gould, 1981). This study implies that, instead of this limited perspective upon human performance, a rhetoric of reform must devise a topic of means that locates skills within specific contexts and predicates continuous assessments of their importance. Skills cannot be prescribed without some process of inquiring into the interests that they represent and the purposes that they serve. The topic of means thus must include various hyphenated skills-in-context, that is to say, knowledge-why as well as knowledge-what and knowledge-how.

The topic of structured goals as the ends of cooperative learning is a clearly recognizable legacy of American social psychology in the traditions led by James, Mead, Lewin and Deutsch. As such, it meets with immediate acceptance by participants in staff development programs. Once again, however, this assent with a topic recognized by the majority of educators comes at great cost. As many critics point out, goals are statements of values which must continuously

undergo critical assessment in order to sustain assent (e.g., Rorty, 1989).

For example, Lawrence Stenhouse (1988) pointed out that agendas, not goals, are what educational activities are about (p. 44). Agendas refer to possibilities that could be actualized in particular situations; on the other hand, goal statements specify outcomes that limit possibilities of interaction, and, by presuming generalized applicability, tend to distort the political and cultural complexities that students and teachers inhabit. Ends-in-view pertain to particular situations, and are subject to ongoing processes of negotiation and adjustment. Particularity and complexity are required for a topic of argument in rhetoric advocating reforms in the manifold environments of schools.

Topics chosen to argue for reforms such as cooperative learning for mainstreaming should be devised to assimilate the complexity of social interactions. Topics must be congruent with the expectations and experiences of the rhetorician's audiences, but it is equally important that topics be selected for their amenability to ongoing critical reflection and assessment.

## Commonplaces

Commonplaces are always compromises between a rhetor's inventiveness and an audience's receptiveness. If, as has

been argued above, topics in a rhetoric of reform must assimilate dynamic and complex relations, then commonplaces likewise must be complicated devices for presenting and recollecting topics.

In consequence, commonplaces of cooperative learning would be hyphenated to show combinations of group interactions: e.g., competitive-cooperation in which the performance of sub-groups is contriently linked to a whole group, such as jigsaw projects or ensemble art where a single set of rules governs effort, or *agon* ; or cooperative-competition in which team activities link groups together in rule-bounded conflict, or antagonism. Rather than attempt to maintain separate categories for cooperation, competition, and individualism, commonplaces could show that varieties of rule-bound social arrangement are themselves interdependent in what Burke called "socio-agony."

Commonplaces can be devised that illustrate the impossibility of bare individualism and the folly of unbridled competition. The "cooperative school" can be conceptualized within cooperative philosophies of human, social and natural existence. In their daily discourses and practices, teachers and administrators recognize that social arrangements in modern schools are rarely symmetrical. Commonplaces should provide innovative and understandable terms for portraying those relations.

Tropes

Metonymies that reduce complex social interactions to variables in process-product research designs are surely recognizable and even welcome to audiences of educators who usually seem to long for a respectable scientific rhetoric that would win for schools the status awarded to hospitals or courts of law. Yet, educators' perennial infatuation with the stable data and predictable outcomes of physiological psychology might not lead to certainty and prestige but only to exacerbated divisions in public schools. Largely because all citizens participate in the massive enterprise of schooling often without strict criteria such as those built by medical or legal professions, a "science of schooling" remains elusive and, some would say, illusory.

Six decades ago, Dewey (1929) declared that the sources of educational science were not to be found in the reductive metonymies of physical science:

> Just because educational science has no ...achievement of laws to fall back upon, it is in a tentative and inchoate state which renders it especially in need of direction by large and fruitful hypotheses. No matter how these are obtained, they are intrinsically philosophical in nature, good or bad philosophy as the case may be. To treat them as scientific rather than philosophic is to conceal from view their hypothetical character and to freeze them into

> rigid dogmas that hamper instead of assisting actual inquiry (in Boydston, p.28).

Dewey's philosophic and pragmatic approach to educational issues remains appropriate for contemporary educational studies, which are still in need of large and fruitful hypotheses that would "render the performance of the educational function more enlightened, more humane, more truly educational than it was before" (*ibid.*).

For instance, philosophic questions and large hypotheses are hallmarks of action research, an approach to educational studies that reverses the metonymy of correlation: rather than reduce classroom interactions to elements in correlations, research questions themselves become parts of inquiry processes that are reflectively analyzed in the contexts of actual classrooms, schools and communities. Action research in the Deweyan and Lewinian traditions remains oriented toward changing social situations through personal interactions, but, in contrast to the ripple effect proposed in the CLC, does not set agendas solely by researchers' priorities (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Liston & Zeichner, 1989; Rudduck & Hopkins, 1985).

In any research program, tropes are subtly pervasive devices; in most educational theory, research and practice, their effects are either taken for granted or minimized.[5] An implication of this study is that reorganized tropes, such as

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[5] For exceptions, see: Greene 1987; Provenzo et al., 1989.

those drawn from action research, could assist in forging dynamic links among practitioners now scattered in isolated classrooms as well as with networks of educational researchers studying such issues as instructional grouping.

## Limitations

The limitations of this study or indeed any project of analysis, are that its implications can only be fragmentary and retrospective. There can be no assurances that rhetorical analysis and reoriented rhetorical strategies can improve the circumstances, purposes, or performance of any current or future activity. Educators responsible for staff development programs aimed at reforming schooling practices will find no inductive generalizations or guaranteed results from the study and analysis of rhetoric. What these recommendations can offer to participants in such activities are occasions for reflection upon the means of communication and their consequences under previous circumstances in particular social and cultural spaces and times. By watching what others said and did, it may be possible to reconsider one's own purposes and methods, but only within the limitations that environments impose upon beliefs, words and deeds.

## Conclusions

There are indisputable indications that CLC programs have fostered strong beliefs in cooperative learning among thousands of educators, including a great many teachers and administrators in "Lake City". Nevertheless, the data and analyses presented here have indicated that the CLC program promoting cooperative learning for mainstreaming met with limited success there. It has been supposed that this reform initiative produced disappointing results because a planned ripple effect did not produce sufficiently widespread belief among teachers and administrators to build a "critical mass." The seductive image was that of physical momentum set in motion by administrators and researchers. Once the original groups of participants had been prepared to believe in the CLC program's purposes and methods, the ranks of believers were expected to grow successively larger. The numbers of committed educators in "Lake City" evidently did not grow for many reasons, one of which was probably a breakdown of communications abetted by policy changes and funding cuts.

Within the scope of rhetoric, the implications that have emerged from this project are, simply, that the rhetoric of reform should be both concrete and complex. Communicative strategies should be concrete in that specific topics, commonplaces and tropes must be chosen for particular situations. They should also be complex, in that the

processes of selection involve multiple overlapping assumptions and rules in a plurality of mental, moral, and symbolic universes. One set of rules cannot encompass the possibilities of communication. Interdependently existing within a common physical universe, human interactions take endless varieties of form which cannot be reduced or standardized.

Evidently, particular rhetorical devices can be effective for advocating particular notions of reform among certain people under certain circumstances. Thus, it is important for all educators to increase their awareness of the details of rhetorical strategies embedded in the daily practices of planning, teaching, and learning. Researchers, policymakers and practitioners could all pay closer attention to the rhetorics that are often taken for granted. In doing so, perhaps those of us involved in education can find ways to deal with the problems of stability and change in fast-moving and dangerous times. The arts of rhetoric can be employed to improve our efforts at reform, to make us more aware of the contradictions and pitfalls in our efforts to find healthy and good ways to live together in a safe world.

In conclusion, then, my own choices of topics, commonplaces and tropes have been offered here not only to analyze other educators' beliefs, but mainly to communicate my own beliefs that educational reforms demand careful study,

and that rhetorical analysis provides methods of inquiry into communications among parties involved in reform movements.

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